

decay \* \* \* Burst sewers, broken gas mains and dead animals have raised an almost overpowering smell in many parts of the city." Hitler's prophecy had been realized: "Give me five years and you will not recognize Germany again," he had said.

#### ANCIENT METZ FALLS

Some 113 miles to the south, on the French border, "Blood and Guts" Gen. George S. Patton had led his Third Army on a 450-mile run from Avranches at the base of the Cherbourg Peninsula to the gates of the fortress city of Metz, where he met the forbidding fortifications of Fort Driant.

The fort had concrete walls seven feet thick, connected by underground tunnels with a central fortress. The defenders had emplaced huge quantities of barbed wire to add to the problems facing attackers. The German garrison of 10,000 had ample supplies of food and water. Other forts in the Metz area were similarly equipped.

In the early days of November, the 5th, 90th and 95th Infantry and 10th Armored divisions of XX Corps were slowed by the heavy rains which plagued the entire theater. Hitler took a very personal interest in the defense of Metz, reiterating his order that it must be held "to the last man." The new garrison commander, Heinrich Kittel, pledged to carry out that order.

There were many individual feats of heroism as U.S. forces slowly closed the jaws of the trap around Metz between Nov. 18-22. Pfc. Elmer A. Eggert of L Co., 379th Inf. Regt., 95th Div., advanced alone against a machine gun, killing five of the enemy and capturing four, earning a Distinguished Service Cross. After his tank received a direct hit, Cpl. C.J. Smith of the 778th Tank Bn. dismounted the .30-caliber machine gun and fought on alone until help arrived; he was also awarded a DSC.

Despite Hitler's own order, he allowed an SS regiment—which he planned to use in the Ardennes offensive—to slip out of Metz in the last stages of the U.S. offensive. Gen. Kittel finally surrendered Metz on Nov. 21, although several of the forts, including Driant, held out well into December before giving up.

The 5th Div.'s November losses were 172 KIA, 1,005 WIA and 143 MIA. The 95th Div. estimated 281 KIA, 1,503 WIA and 405 MIA. Records of casualties of other units involved in the Metz operation are incomplete. Hugh M. Cole, official Army historian of the Metz operation, concluded that the capture of Metz was "skillfully planned and marked by thorough execution," and "may long remain an outstanding example of a prepared battle for the reduction of a fortified position."

The U.S. First and Ninth Armies had launched Operation Queen in mid-November, with the Ninth clearing the west bank of the Roer River from Brachelen to Altdorf by early December. (See the November issue for the Battle of Huertgen Forest.) Queen witnessed, incidentally, the largest air-ground cooperative effort to date in the ETO.

Offensive operations were resumed Jan. 17, 1945. Operation Grenade achieved the Allied assault crossings over the Roer River, followed by a northeastward drive by the U.S. Ninth Army's link up with the First Canadian Army along the Rhine. The Ninth Army (its dash to the Rhine was dubbed Operation Flashpoint) comprised four corps with 13 divisions. In reaching the Rhine, the Ninth Army captured 30,000 German soldiers and killed 6,000, at the cost of 7,300 U.S. casualties.

A sequel to Grenade—Operation Lumberjack—was a converging thrust made by the U.S. First and Third Armies to trap the Germans in the Eifel Mountains during the first

week of March. GIs were now poised to "bounce" the Rhine.

#### REMAGEN: AN "OPEN WOUND"

On the afternoon of March 7, 1945, 34-year-old Sgt. Alex Drabik from Toledo, Ohio, bobbed and weaved his squad across a Rhine River railroad bridge (Ludendorff) at the little town of Remagen, Germany. His company commander, Lt. Karl Timmermann, from A Co., 27th Armored Inf. Bn., 9th Armored Div., who had ordered the crossing, followed close behind. Drabik, Timmermann and a handful of infantrymen, engineers and tankers, performed one of the most incredible feats in the annals of military history.

The Rhine River had not been crossed by an invading army since Napoleon's time over a century earlier. Hitler had ordered all the bridges up and down the Rhine to be blown up as the Americans approached. The last bridge, between Cologne and Koblenz, was still standing to enable German tanks and artillery to retreat safely. Just as Lt. Timmermann gave the order for Drabik's squad to cross, tremendous explosions shook the bridge and seemed to lift it from its foundations. The structure shuddered, but miraculously remained standing.

At this point, Lt. Hugh Mott and two brave armored engineers, Eugene Dorland and John Reynolds, dashed out on the bridge and feverishly cut wires to the remaining explosive charges. The Germans blew a 30-foot crater in the approach to the bridge to prevent tanks from crossing. Sgt. Clemon Knapp of Rupert, W.Va., and a crew, manned a "tank dozer"—a Sherman tank with a bulldozer blade—and filled in the crater. Knapp and his crew received Silver Stars for their actions.

The night of March 7 was one of the darkest of the war. Yet Lt. Windsor Miller gently guided his 35-ton Sherman tanks across the shaky bridge, dodging some gaping holes as he maneuvered between white tapes strung by the engineers. Across the Rhine, Miller's tank platoon beat off several German counter-attacks as they helped the armored infantry hang on to their tenuous foothold.

When the bridge was captured, the first troops proudly attached a sign reading: Cross the Rhine with dry feet—Courtsey 9th Arm'd Div.

The 9th, 78th and 99th Infantry divisions rushed to the scene to reinforce the bridgehead. Military police, tank-destroyer and anti-aircraft units were awarded Presidential Unit Citations for their heroism under fire.

Hitler threw in jet planes, underwater swimmers, giant V-2 rockets and massive reinforcements in trying to destroy the bridge. The bridge itself was so severely damaged that it collapsed without warning on March 17, taking the lives of 28 repairmen and injuring 93. But not before a pontoon and trestle bridge had been built under fire on either side of the permanent bridge.

#### WEST BANK CLEANSED

By mid-March, mopping up operations west of the Rhine were completed by the U.S. VIII Corps. Within a few days, Operation Undertone was under way by the U.S. Seventh Army to clear the Saar-Palatinate triangle.

On March 22, 1945, the 90th Inf. Div. cleared Mainz while other GIs achieved a surprise late night crossing of the Rhine at Oppenheim, south of Mainz. By then, the U.S. First Army held a bridgehead across the river 20 miles wide and eight miles deep; six divisions were east of the Rhine. The stage was set for the final drive into Germany's heartland.

□ 1430

#### REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 24 AND HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 5

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 24 and House Concurrent Resolution 5.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

#### THE CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 30 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. DORNAN] for his eloquent testimony about the importance of the Battle of the Bulge in U.S. history, and the importance of our service men and women who have given us the opportunity to serve here in Congress and to try to make a difference in each person's life.

Mr. Speaker, it occurs to me that the media's coverage of the new Speaker of the House is further proof that elitists in the Washington press corps still do not get it. They fail to understand that the Republicans' sweep in November was not about the personalities of power inside the beltway that accompanied the democratically controlled Congress for so many years. The election was not about power in Washington at all. It was about ideas, about helping people.

Speaker NEWT GINGRICH is an excellent articulator of the conservative tenets of individual freedom and decentralized government, as well outlined by Jay Heslick in the Southeast Missourian.

Just this past week we have been discussing how we can work with our families, our neighborhoods, and our schools. The fact is we are growing school meals. Hungry children cannot learn. We are growing kids, not government. We are growing school meals 4.5 percent a year. Under our plan, in 5 years we will be spending \$1 billion more on school meals than we are today.

For kids under school age, we are growing the WIC program, for lower-income women, infants, and children. A country that is broke certainly cannot feed a hungry child. The Clinton budget piles \$1 trillion in new debt on our kids, which they will have to repay with interest. Unless we turn this around, a child born today will pay \$180,000 in Federal debt during his or her lifetime. That is not for a house, a car, or a college education. That is interest on the Federal debt, and the Clinton budget is growing.